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WELCOME...

TO THE NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY

Welcome to the unusual beauty of the North Cascades. Enjoy the view across deep canyons to towering, craggy peaks. True the cascading mountain streams from snowcapped peaks through fragile mountain meadows to azure-colored lakes.

This modern highway opens vast areas of these rugged mountains for the enjoyment of the forest and alpine environment. Many areas are fragile and easily destroyed by the simple act of setting up camp in an open leather patch or trampling out the delicate flowers of a water-soaked mountain meadow.

Environmentally concerned visitors are asked to assist in the protection of this great heritage by encouraging a few good environmental practices...

- ...pack out the litter—every litter bit hurts. Even from the gum wrapper along the trail invalids the beauty of the scene. Pick up what someone else might have dropped.
- ...camp only in designated areas. Concentrated use of an area kills the vegetation which takes years to replace at high altitude and fragile soil conditions.
- ...travel only on designated trails. Cutting across switch backs and making new trails can cause soil erosion.
- ...follow trail regulations posted for animals and motor equipment. Some meadow areas and trails are not suitable for heavy traffic. Use other than hiking will cause erosion problems.
- ...take nothing but pictures.

The North Cascades are yours to enjoy, protect, and keep clean.

History of the North Cascades Highway

For more than 100 years men have dreamed of a road through the North Cascades.

Fur trader Alexander Ross led the first recorded evidence of a route over the Cascades. His diary told about exploring the North Cascades in 1814. For many years after Ross, a few hardy trappers were the only North Cascades explorers. Then the discovery of gold lured many men into this vast wilderness. Prospectors, excited by the famous California gold strike of 1849, began work in streams not far from the North Cascades looking for "color."

Ruby-colored stones (probably garnets), found with the gold nuggets that set off the gold rush of 1859 to the North Cascades, gave Ruby Creek its name. While the diggings were not as rich as first expected, part of the reason that the rush lasted only by trail was due to the difficult access problems posed by this rugged, primitive area. Access was either entirely by trail, or by a combination of trail and water—either to Canada's Fraser River or the Skagit River from the west, or the Columbia and Methow Rivers on the east—packing the needed supplies. Lack of transportation, rugged country, and fierce weather tended to discourage many prospectors. During the next 20 years activity subsided to just the isolated prospector who was also a combination trapper-homesite.

Another flurry of gold fever struck when gold was "rediscovered" in the upper Skagit headwaters around the mouth of Ruby Creek, and along Granite and Slate Creeks. This rush was short-lived also, culminating in 1880. A written reminiscence records: "On July 4, 1880, a miner's meeting was held at Ruby City. Around 4,000 men were in attendance at this meeting. Speechmaking and receiving reports from the various districts were the order of the day." And, later: "Abandoning their tools and other belongings, the next morning found 5,000 debilitated miners on the trail. Only one man was left behind, the postmaster." It was a report story of earlier years; inadequate transportation played a large part in their failure.

The discovery of gold in 1858, and again in 1880, pointed up the need for better access, and several attempts were made to locate a wagon road. The miners and cattlemen in the Okanogan Valley alike petitioned the legislature in Washington for help to get their products to coastal markets. The State responded in 1883 by appropriating a sum of \$20,000 to build 200 miles of road from Bellinzona Bay to the Columbia River by way of Ruby Creek. This was the grand total of \$100 a mile to survey and construct a road through one of the most rugged sections of the United States.

Eventually, in 1896, a board of examiners judged Cascade Pass as the most feasible route and work was started on a wagon road and trails. By following year most of it was impassable even to pack stock because of slides and washouts. Little more was done on the road, however, until the 1930's when some piecemeal construction took place using Public Work Administration and Civilian

Conservation Corps funds. As a result, the Cascade River Road was extended to near its present terminus.

After World War II interest in the North Cascades route increased. The final route of the highway settled upon was Ruby, Granite, and Early Winters Creeks. The North Cross-State Highway Association, organized in the middle 1930's, was instrumental in the culmination of the century-old dream. Construction began in 1960, 102 years after the first waves of eager miners fought their way up Skagit Gorge to Ruby gold fields, or up Canyon Gorge to Early Winters Creek to a hoped-for bonanza. Now, with few exceptions, only remnants of the mining past remain.

Today, as you overlook the serene beauty of Ross Lake, consider the many who searched for riches from the east. Did they enjoy the scenic views as we do today... or did the hardships dull the vision of tranquility?

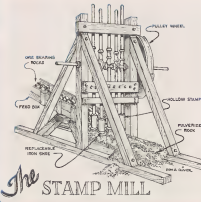
Each era has its colorful mosaic of interesting people and happenings that left their mark for future generations to ponder. The North Cascades had its share. Captain Joe, an elderly Methow Indian, was employed as a guide for a government expedition in 1886. While hunting the horses one morning Joe stumbled across a big gold ledge outcropping. Breaking off a piece he put it in his pocket but said nothing about his "find" until the next day. The party went back to the area but could not relocate the ledge. When the piece of ore was finally shown in Portland, it produced great excitement and helped stimulate the activity in 1887 and 1888.

Tommy Rowland (Roland), built a cabin and barn on the slope above the Skagit River. He prospered, raised vegetables and hay which he sold to packers. One of his gold claims was called "Nip and Tuck."

Roland was an eccentric man who announced himself the "Prophet Eliza" and he named his place "New Jerusalem." Eventually he was taken "outside," judged insane and committed to an institution. He managed to escape and returned to New Jerusalem. Later by use of devious methods, some prospectors who probably had designs on his claims, induced Tommy to travel "outside" again. Authorities were notified of his whereabouts and he was again taken to the state hospital in Sedro Woolley. The accounts of the remainder of his life are lost in oblivion. Roland Point on Ross Lake was the site of his New Jerusalem.

The Davis Homestead-Roadhouse was built in 1888 near the mouth of Steacie Creek (site of today's community of Diablo). It offered "clean beds and good food," and became the major stopping-off place for most early travelers. A Forest Service Ranger Station was built on the Davis claim in 1907. The first Foresthouse was built in 1908 on the Davis ranch to power a sawmill and for irrigation purposes. A replica of the original plant is on display in Diablo. During the gold excitement of the early 1890's, a center log cabins built on the Black Jack claim almost overnight, became known as Barnum.

The settlement, four miles northwest of Harts Pass, once boasted a post office, hotel, restaurants, saloons, dance hall and more than 1,000 persons. At the beginning all equipment, including stamp mills, was brought in over horse trails from the east. One went out the same way. The ore was low-grade and did not yield to treatment as readily as was anticipated. By 1907 the whole town became panic-stricken. In a few weeks it was entirely deserted except for a few watchmen. Tools, blacksmith shops, wagons, bedding, and cooking utensils were scattered just as they were left by their last users in the final exodus. By 1910, most of the mining activity in the North Cascades, with an occasional exception, became a thing of the past.



HIGHWAY OPEN

The distances today's motorist on the North Cascades Highway can leisurely cover in one hour took the driver several days, but busy snow will winter a major portion of the highway up to seven or eight months of the year. Although probable open dates will be from June through October, it will vary from year to year according to weather and avalanche conditions. The Washington State Department of Highways has jurisdiction over patrol, maintenance and snow removal of the highway itself.

FILL YOUR TANK

MT. BAKER NATIONAL FOREST

NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY

WEST SIDE



POINTS OF INTEREST (from West to East)

MARBLEMOUNT—Small town at junction of Skagit and Cascade Rivers, offers gas, food, lodging, Park Service Ranger Station.

CASCADE RIVER ROAD SIDE TRIP—A 25-mile-long road, mostly gravel, leads to a trailhead three miles below beautiful Cascade Pass, a favorite for afternoon hikers. Trail continues down outside toward Lake Chelan. Two campgrounds are located along the middle section of the road.

NEWHALEM—Headquarters town for Seattle City Power and Light Company's Skagit operation, offers snacks, and a Public Information Station. Seattle City Light tour of the entire Skagit Project begins here. **ADVANCE RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED.** Attractions in Newhalem include the Gorge Powerhouse, Ladder Creek Falls and Rock Gardens, and Ross Creek, where J. D. Ross, the "father of City Light," and his wife are interred.

GORGE DAM OVERLOOK—The original dam built in 1919 was a wood crib. This was replaced in 1950 by a concrete diversion dam, and by the present high dam in 1961. It is 300 feet high, 670 feet long, backing up a reservoir 41 miles long.

DIABLO—Small company town for City Light employees. Interesting features include the powerhouse, a replica of the first Skagit waterwheel powerhouse, and the unusual incline railway. This powered lift rises 600 feet up the mountainside performing Company work as well as carrying thousands of tourists and fishermen each summer. All construction materials and machinery for the Ross Dam and powerhouse, and for Diablo Dam were taken up the 68% incline.

DIABLO DAM—When completed in 1930, this was the highest arch-type dam in the world. It is 389 feet high and 1,180 feet long. The five-mile-long lake provides scenic cruising up Thunder Arm or up close-walled Skagit Gorge to Ross Dam.

DIABLO LAKE OVERLOOK—A beautiful panorama unfolds from Thunder Creek to the hanging gardens on Colonial and Pyramid Peaks. The blue-green color of Diablo Lake is caused by the "rock-floor" or fine sediment brought in by glacial-fed streams.

ROSS DAM VIEWPOINT—A glimpse of the upper portion of Ross Dam is available looking upstream, or north. This is the only point on the highway where the dam is visible. The only access to the dam, or to Ross Lake Resort, is by trail or by boat either from below on Diablo Lake, or from above on Ross Lake through Canada. Ross Dam, the key structure of the Skagit Project, was completed in 1949 to the height of 540 feet from bedrock. The five-foot-square waffle-like surface was designed to hold additional concrete for possible dam enlargement.

ROSS LAKE OVERLOOK—Ross Lake, the heart of the Ross Lake National Recreation Area, extends some 24 miles northward, backing 1 1/2 miles into Canada. The Recreation Area boundary extends about two miles up the mountains on each side of the lake. Beyond the boundary, on the west side, is the wild, rugged North Unit of the North Cascades National Park; on the east is the equally wild Pugeten Wilderness. Roads will not be constructed in either area; access is by foot or horseback only.

There are 10 small campgrounds located on Ross Lake; all are boat-access only, except the northernmost one at Hotspring, which is served by a road through Canada. A proposed tramway up Ruby Mountain (to the south) would have its base area near here, in the vicinity of the Ross Lake Overlook.

East Ross Lake Trail, Ross Lake National Recreation Area.



Ross Dam, 540 feet high, the largest of the three dams in the Seattle City Light, Skagit Hydroelectric Project.

POINTS OF INTEREST (from East to West)

NORTH CASCADES SMOKEJUMPER BASE—Four miles east of Windrop on outside Methow River Road. Home of the first airborne firefighting in the Pacific Northwest. Visitors welcome.

WINTHROP—Small town of 500, recently renovated in "Old West" theme with fake front buildings, etc. Forest Service Ranger Station.

HARTS PASS—A 23-mile side trip northwest from Mazama. State Peak Lookout is an additional three miles. The road, hewn out to serve the 1890 gold rush, is very narrow in places. No trailers are allowed beyond 10-mile point. Reasonably mountain-wise drivers can pilot the family car to Harts Pass now. A small campground can be used for headquarters to hike and explore. Many old mines are located in the Harts Pass area. Mine buildings and improvements on private property, help protect them. For your own safety stay out of old tunnels and buildings, and keep off of old trails.

This is the most northern access point to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail in Washington. The climax of the whole trip is the 360° panorama that unfolds from State Peak. The view encompasses several hundred square miles of wild, tumbled mountain scenery from Mt. Baker on the west, through the glaciated valleys of the Pasayten Wilderness, to the sea-colored eastern horizon, and south to snow-covered Glacier Peak.

EARLY WINTERS INFORMATION STATION.

WASHINGTON PASS OVERLOOK—One of the truly outstanding highlights along the North Cascades Highway. A 1/2-mile road leads from the highway to a parking and picnic area. The trail to the overlook is suitable for wheelchair travel. *Caution:* The guard rail at the overlook cannot do the whole job of protecting visitors or guarding natural features. Do not let children wander alone. The spectacular view looks down Early Winters Creek to the needle peaks of Silver Star Mountain and Shagtooth Ridge, to Cooper Basin, framed by Kangaroo Ridge and Early Winters Spire, and culminates at Liberty Bell Mountain. Please do not remove or destroy any features of the area; rocks, mooses, living and even dead trees are part of the natural scene.

WHISTLER BASIN VIEWPOINT—Beautiful mountain meadows and fall colors on slopes of Whistler Mountain provide the only real close-up view of alpine meadows adjacent to highway.

RAINY PASS—Elevation 4,840 feet. Limited parking at present. A 1.4-mile trail leads to Lake Ann. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail crosses highway here. Heading west, the highway begins to drop down glaciated Granite Creek enroute to Ross Lake.



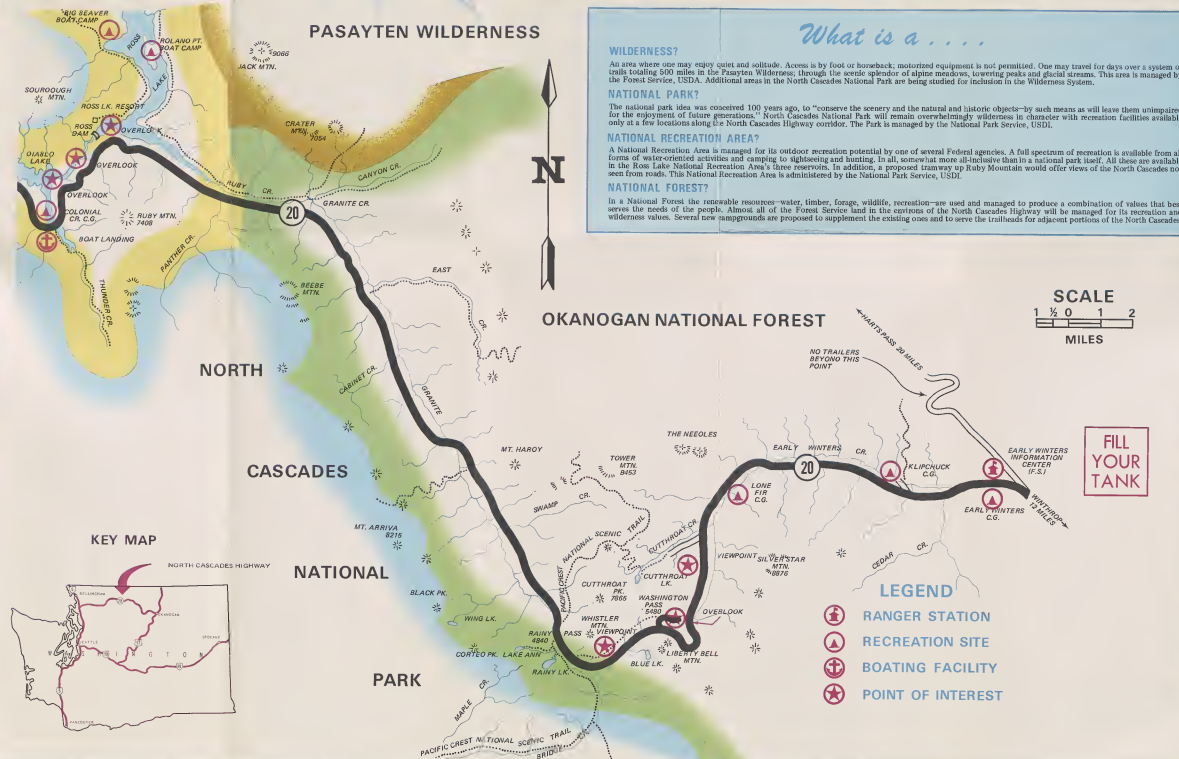
Liberty Bell viewed from Washington Pass Overlook.

RECREATION SITES

NAME	TEXT	TRAILER	PHONE	BOAT DOCK	AGENCY
(FROM WESTSIDE)					
MARBLE CREEK	21	6			USFS
MINERAL PARK	2	17	4		USFS
GOODSELL CREEK		30			NPS
COLUMBIAN CREEK		87	1		NPS
(FROM EASTSIDE)					
EARLY WINTERS	7				USFS
KLIPCHUCK (10/21/1972)	28	20			USFS
LONE FIR	14	6			USFS
"CHARGE CAMP"					

NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY

EAST SIDE



What is a . . .

WILDERNESS?

An area where one may enjoy quiet and solitude. Access is by foot or horseback; motorized equipment is not permitted. One may travel for days on a system of trails leading 500 miles in the Pasayten Wilderness, through the scenic splendor of alpine meadows, towering peaks and glacial streams. This area is managed by the Forest Service, USDA. Additional areas in the North Cascades National Park are being studied for inclusion in the Wilderness System.

NATIONAL PARK?

The national park idea was conceived 100 years ago, to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." North Cascade National Park will ensure overwhelmingly wilderness in character with recreation facilities available only at a few locations along the North Cascades Highway corridor. The Park is managed by the National Park Service, USDA.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA?

A National Recreation Area is managed for its outdoor recreation potential by one of several federal agencies. A full spectrum of recreation is available from all forms of water-oriented activities and camping to sightseeing and hunting. In all, recreational opportunities that are a national park itself. All these are available in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area's lake reservoir. In addition, a proposed tramway up Ruby Mountain would offer views of the North Cascades not seen from roads. This National Recreation Area is administered by the National Park Service, USDA.

NATIONAL FOREST?

In a National Forest the renewable resources—water, timber, forage, wildlife, recreation—are used and managed to produce a combination of values that best serve the needs of the people. Almost all of the Forest Service land to the east of the North Cascades Highway will be managed for its recreation and wilderness values. Several new campgrounds are proposed to supplement the existing ones and to serve the trailheads for adjacent portions of the North Cascades.

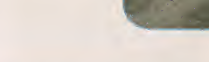
CLIMATE AND NATIVE VEGETATION

Native vegetation is almost a direct reflection of the climate. As the first major mountain barrier on Washington's west coast, the Cascades bring out great amounts of precipitation from the moisture-laden storms that originate over the waters of the North Pacific. Most of the moisture falls in the winter months in the form of snow or cold rain; some of the higher elevations accumulate snow packs 20 feet deep. Even in relatively low areas several feet of snow is common. The inhabitants of the town of Diablo may be isolated by avalanches periodically throughout the winter. Avalanche chutes are readily recognizable as the long, vertical, shrub-covered strips on otherwise timbered hillsides.

In the far western portion, especially in the deep valleys, Douglas fir occurs mixed with western hemlock and western redcedar, interspersed with heavy stands of Pacific silver fir. Together, with a ground cover of moss, ferns, vine maple, huckleberry, etc., it forms the ecological blend known as the "rain forest." Timberline is generally in the 4,500- to 5,500-foot elevation range. The trees at this elevation consist of isolated patches of coniferous mountain hemlock and alpine fir separating park-like meadows or giving out life in a rocky cleft.

In the Ross Lake area the vegetation pattern becomes transitional. Lodgepole and ponderosa pine are found interspersed with the wetland species. Although most of the trees on Granite Creek are wetland types, the typical wetland undergrowth has disappeared. Near Rainy Pass outside trees also take over. Lodgepole, western white, and ponderosa pine separate meadows and grassy areas. Much of the scenic grandeur of the Pasayten Wilderness is due to this open park-like character.

Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail crosses the North Cascades Highway at Rainy Pass. The trail meanders along the crest of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada between Mexico and Canada. The trail is closed to motorized vehicles.



Windrop Pass meadow and Liberty Bell Mountain. Alpine meadows are fragile. Walk on designated trails, and camp in designated areas.

THE MAKING OF THE North Cascades

GEOLOGY

The North Cascades as we observe them now are at least "second generation" mountains. Out of the jumbled mass of rocks, geologists have deciphered the story that many millions of years ago—probably 400 to 500 million—sediments, lime-layers and shales under a shallow sea were compressed and slowly rose to become moderate-sized mountains. Subsequent erosion lowered this range to small foothills which eventually subsided beneath an ancient sea for more eons of time. Today's mountains probably began some 15 million years ago as granite-type intrusions slowly pushed up through the sea sediments of this shallow sea. Many stages are evident with periods of erosion and faulting taking place. Pressure and intense heating altered much of the granite into crystalline gneiss which are left today as spires and horns of some of the highest peaks.

GLACIERS

About 500,000 years ago the "ice ages" began in the North Cascades. They peaked three or possibly four times when the glaciers covered most of the land surface above, the climate moderated with the ice melting and the forests again forcing their way up the valleys.

Most of the alpine scenery left today—U-shaped valleys, horns, serrated ridges, hanging valleys, and cirque or tarn lakes—is the result of the last ice age which ended some 10,000 years ago. In some locations most of the ice never melted. These are the glaciers and permanently snow-capped peaks of the North Cascades. The continental United States has about 1,100 glaciers, covering a total area of 800 square miles. The date of Washington alone has about 800 glaciers covering 160 square miles.

BE WISE! FILL YOUR TANK

There are only limited recreation supplies available between the towns of Marblemount and Winthrop, a distance of 85 miles. Van motorists will check their gas and oil before entering the North Cascades.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WRITE OR CALL

North Cascades National Park
Marblemount, Washington
Phone 873-4590

Mt. Baker National Forest
Baker River Ranger Station
Concrete, Washington
Phone 833-2631

Okanogan National Forest
Winthrop Ranger Station
Winthrop, Washington
Phone 966-2266

Washington State
Department of Highways
Mt. Vernon, Washington
Phone 336-2177
Okanogan, Washington
Phone 423-3280